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THE SOVIET BLOC ARMED FORCES
AND THE CUBAN CRISIS
A DISCUSSION OF READINESS MEASURES

NATIONAL INDICATIONS CENTER
Washington, D. C.

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INTRODUCTION

The movement into Cuba of Soviet strategic missiles and their accompanying Soviet combat forces was probably the most risky venture undertaken by the USSR in the period since World War II. It is commonly believed to have brought the US and the USSR close to nuclear war; there are some Soviet statements which suggest that Soviet leaders, at least, believed this to be so.

Regardless of how the Soviets estimated that the US might react to their actions (and there are of course many indications that they did not expect so strong a reaction), they must have considered it a possibility that the risks of hostilities between the two great powers would be substantially increased. In sheer prudence, any military high command would in these circumstances have taken measures to bring its military forces to a state of readiness for the possibility, however remote, of a military confrontation. Further, since the hoped-for successful positioning of strategic missiles in Cuba undoubtedly was also designed to provide a threshold for further aggressive pressures elsewhere against the West (and the evidence indicates that the Berlin question was clearly on the Soviet immediate post-Cuba schedule), then again, achievement of a high state of military readiness would be sought to support the anticipated continuing risks.

The USSR in fact had months to prepare for the crisis and to bring its forces to the desired state of military readiness. While it could not anticipate precisely the date when the US would discover the presence of strategic missiles in Cuba, it could determine precisely and well in advance when the danger of such detection would begin. It was thus in a position gradually to undertake such measures as it deemed necessary and to prepare against the date when maximum readiness of its forces might be required. The USSR was not in the position that it was in the Polish-Hungarian crisis of 1956 when it was caught by surprise and had to react suddenly and without adequate prior planning.

The purpose of this paper is to examine, from the standpoint of our future warning problems and capabilities, some of the military measures which the USSR undertook, particularly from about 1 July onward when the movement of military equipment and troops to Cuba began, and to compare the timing of these actions with the course of the buildup of Soviet forces and equipment in Cuba. Particular attention is given to the month of September, when the movement of the strategic missiles into Cuba began and the USSR announced that its forces were being brought to "highest combat readiness."

Although this project has involved an extensive review of available information, it is not intended as a definitive project on the subject. It is not a final treatise, but a primer. It is intended not to answer questions but to raise

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them, not to close research into the subject but to open up some of the avenues of future inquiry which may shed more light on the crucial question from the warning standpoint of how ready the Soviet forces actually were for hostilities and on the capabilities of Western intelligence to determine that level of readiness.

It is clear in even this initial approach that the gaps in our knowledge are far greater than the extent of our information and that we have at best only a limited understanding of the steps which the USSR took during the summer and fall of 1962. If this be doubted, it need only be pointed out that the USSR moved a minimum of 20,000 combat troops (and quite possibly more) from unknown points in the USSR to Cuba, together with the equipment for entire SAM battalions and MRBM regiments, as well as T-54s, short-range tactical missiles and antitank missiles, and quantities of air, naval and electronic equipment--without a discernible ripple in the USSR itself. The movement of the ships was promptly detected, and there were dozens of reports from Cuba--some poor, some fair, and some excellent--concerning the unloading and nature of the equipment. Its precise nature was finally established from aerial photography. But there is even now no information relating to the movements of this small expeditionary force and its equipment into Soviet ports. Thousands of troops staged through the Baltic port of Kaliningrad, less than 25 miles from the Polish border, without a rumor of the movement ever reaching the West. In view of this accomplishment in security, it may be asked what other and even more significant military measures or movements might have been undertaken in total secrecy.

This paper is entirely the work of the National Indications Center, and the interpretations have not been coordinated with other agencies. An effort has been made to check the accuracy of all facts and reports cited. In addition to material drawn from current reporting and publications during the period, assistance in the preparation of this paper has been provided by: a compilation of Soviet press comment on military readiness in the Cuban crisis (1 September-25 November 1962), prepared by the Foreign Documents Division, Central Intelligence Agency; and studies on Soviet and Satellite military activity and readiness measures during the period [] []

Comments on this paper and particularly information which may shed further light on the preparedness status of Soviet forces will be welcomed. They should be addressed to the National Indications Center, Room BC 956, Pentagon, []

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DISCUSSION

1. Timing of the Soviet Decision: There is no clear evidence as to when the Soviet decision to undertake the Cuban venture was made or when discussions were held with the Cubans on the subject. No high-level exchange of visits is known to have occurred during the period when the decisions must have been taken. It appears reasonably certain that the USSR decided on the Cuban buildup some time between the end of 1961, following the failure of its efforts to secure a Berlin settlement that autumn, and the early spring of 1962. In view of the magnitude of the logistic effort and the extensive planning involved in the coordination of the various shipments, it appears that the probable latest date for a final decision was April. Thus all Soviet moves at least from then on, particularly military measures, must be examined as possibly related to preparedness for a crisis some time in the autumn. It is also possible that certain earlier Soviet moves, notably the delivery of large numbers of additional fighter aircraft to the East German and Bulgarian Air Forces in December and January, were in part contingency preparations for an anticipated greater air defense requirement several months later, but no firm conclusion can be drawn.

2. April-June: This paper does not attempt to review in any detail Soviet military or political preparations prior to July. The April to June period, however, generally does not appear to have involved exceptional military activity which might have provided much hint that the USSR was already embarking on a course of action which would involve an extraordinary degree of risk. However, a few developments are noteworthy.

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[REDACTED] During June, the USSR announced the lowering of the draft age (an expected move in view of the shortage of manpower of military age).

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Politically, during this period, the USSR was again stepping up its threats to proceed with unilateral action on a German peace treaty and its demands for an end to the occupation status in West Berlin. There were hints of a possible new Berlin crisis about August.

3. Soviet Moves in Indonesia: Meanwhile, in April and May, the USSR rapidly began the delivery of additional military equipment to Indonesia, including TU-16 bombers and submarines manned by Soviet crews, in order to meet "the growing threat from the Dutch in New Guinea." Soviet air commander Marshal Vershinin arrived in Djakarta in late June and reportedly encouraged an attack on West New Guinea using Soviet weapons. A similar line was said to have been taken by Mikoyan during a later visit in July, by which time there were increasing signs that Soviet "volunteers" might actually be used in the attack. The Indonesian attack was planned for August and forestalled only at the last minute by successful negotiations largely conducted under US auspices. Whatever other reasons the USSR may have had to encourage a military solution to the West New Guinea problem, hostilities in August and September clearly would have provided a substantial diversion of world attention from other areas and a potential cover for the Cuban buildup. The deliveries of equipment also served to place six Soviet-manned submarines and a number of Soviet medium-range bombers in a strategic location in the South Pacific.

4. July-August: The movements of the first Soviet ships carrying equipment and troops for the military buildup in Cuba began in early to mid-July and increased substantially during August. While the pattern and areas of certain Soviet military activity suggested possible installation of surface-to-air missile sites, little information became available as to the nature of the shipments until about mid-August when the Komar missile patrol boats were first identified en route. On 29 August, photography identified the first of the SAM sites and the cruise missile sites and provided the first evidence of the probable delivery of MIG-21s. There was as yet no activity which would have indicated preparations for the establishment of MRBM or IRBM sites.

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On 12 July, the USSR issued a significant statement on Berlin, which said that the Western powers were not displaying an understanding of the need for a German peace treaty and declared that the Soviet Union, with other peace-loving states, "will have to solve the question of signing a German peace treaty...without the participation of the Western powers."

[redacted]

On 21 July, the USSR announced that it had given the order to resume nuclear testing, and an extended series of tests began on 1 August.

During August, no major Soviet military exercises were noted, [redacted]

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The principal focus of both Soviet military and political interest was apparently on East Germany where, on 22 August, the abolition of the office of the Soviet Berlin commandant was announced and on the following day East Germany announced the appointment of an East German Berlin commandant. East German leaders Ulbricht and Stoph spent the entire month of August in the USSR. There were a number of indications of increasing East German security measures and of possible East German preparations to assume a more active role in Allied access to Berlin; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] References to the conclusion of a peace treaty with East Germany increased and, although no time limit was specifically indicated, there were several suggestions that Khrushchev might attend the UN session in the fall in connection with the Berlin question.

A number of leading Soviet officers paid visits to Eastern Europe, possibly in connection with planning for future Warsaw Pact exercises or other coordinated Soviet-Satellite military activity.

5. The September Readiness Measures: Whatever state of readiness the Soviet armed forces had achieved by the end of August, it was probably only preparatory to the extraordinary series of measures undertaken during the month of September. The timing of these actions, in conjunction with the actual schedule of deliveries to Cuba and Soviet political actions and statements, strongly indicate that the USSR believed that maximum danger and a most critical period in its buildup in Cuba would occur during September. In fact, the most striking feature of the activity during September is the remarkable coincidence of a number of widespread Soviet military measures with the delivery to Cuba of the first of the medium range missiles and what might be called the official public opening of the Soviet political deception effort and massive propaganda campaign designed to forestall any US military action against Cuba. The coincidence of all these measures, largely between 8 and 20 September, provides very strong evidence of the most careful advance planning and preparations and suggests that the Soviet military steps were probably not primarily a response to US announcements but were part of a predetermined schedule of preparedness measures.

The following are the highlights, but by no means all, of the most significant known developments during September, arranged in chronological order and summarized very briefly:

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2 Sep: The Soviets announced they were sending some military equipment and technicians to Cuba in view of imperialist threats.

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- 4 Sep: President Kennedy announced the arrival in Cuba of SAMs and other equipment and Soviet technicians, warning that the gravest issues would arise if offensive equipment were to be sent.
- 4 Sep: A buildup was beginning in the Soviet Far East for what was to be the largest exercise ever held in the area, involving components of all forces and a number of unusually realistic features.
- 7 Sep: The President asked for authority to call up 150,000 reservists.
- 7 Sep: The USSR issued its annual callup and release order, which was entirely normal and indicated that fall releases from the armed forces would not be deferred.

- 8-15 Sep: The first movements of MRBMs into the Cuban ports of Casilda (c. 8 September) and Mariel (c. 15 September) probably began, destined for the sites at Sagua la Grande and San Cristobal.
- 9-13 Sep: The USSR closed the major portion of the Moscow-Leningrad highway (having announced an intention to do so on 6 August) for reasons which remain unknown but probably for military exercises or deployments. There were concurrent indications of possible large-scale exercises in the western military districts but little is known of their nature.
- 11 Sep: TASS carried the Soviet Government statement on Cuba which said that all weapons being sent to Cuba were "designed exclusively for defensive purposes," that there was no need for the USSR to deploy its missiles to any other country, and that an attack on Cuba would "be the beginning of the unleashing of war." It also said that the Minister of Defense had been instructed to bring Soviet forces to the "highest combat readiness" and that the Berlin issue would be deferred until after the US elections in November.

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- 10-20 Sep: There was a very low level of flight activity by Long Range Aviation aircraft in the western USSR, which was not attributable to weather.
- 11-20 Sep: The Northern Fleet engaged in an "exercise," involving the putting to sea of a surface force and other activity which suggested anti-nuclear dispersal and defense measures rather than a normal exercise. Northern Fleet Air Force activity increased sharply, particularly very heavy schedules for flights over the Norwegian/Greenland Seas. The activity lessened after 21 September.
- 11-18 Sep: A major portion of the Baltic Fleet put to sea, dispersed to some extent but apparently largely in the general area of home ports. An area in the Gulf of Finland was closed to all ships 12 September. There was increased surveillance of the entrance to the Baltic by Soviet, East German and probably Polish ships 11-18 September.
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Mid-Sep: The USSR was engaged in an intensive propaganda campaign charging that the US was preparing for an attack on Cuba and stressing Soviet deterrent capabilities against such aggression. The Soviet press, particularly the military press, repeatedly reiterated that Soviet forces were being brought to "highest combat readiness" which would enable them to respond instantly to aggression. One English language broadcast defined their readiness status as "war footing."

[REDACTED]

Sep: There were a number of indications of increased East German military and security measures in the Berlin area. An East German regimental commander who defected in early September reported that units had been inspected by the Warsaw Pact high command, that training was to be accelerated and that he believed there would be a blockade of Berlin. Soviet statements indicated new moves with respect to Berlin would follow shortly after the US elections, when Khrushchev might visit the UN.

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c. 27 Four Soviet F-class submarines departed Northern Fleet waters;
Sep: these were the four subsequently detected in the quarantine zone.

As will be readily apparent, the foregoing measures cannot be described under a single category such as a simple "alert," or even widespread simultaneous exercises, since they involved an apparent variety of activities, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Least is known of the nature of the activity in the western USSR, except possibly for the naval activity, although there is strong reason to suspect that the unusual security [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] may well have served to cover a series of unusual preparedness measures, the true nature and extent of which are not yet apparent. In particular, the activity points up the extreme difficulty of distinguishing realistic exercises from actual combat deployments and raising of combat readiness of Soviet forces and lends support to the likelihood, which has been noted in Soviet military literature, that preparations for war will be undertaken insofar as possible under the guise of exercise activity.

The coincidence of all this activity, which is apparently unprecedented in the post-World War II history of Soviet military forces, and particularly when considered in conjunction with the USSR's own statements as to the nature of its readiness measures, strongly suggests that this period may be the most significant for indications and warning purposes of any period of Soviet military activity. Although the full extent of these measures can only be surmised at present from the probably fragmentary information thus far available, they may well be the closest to a "live" readying of Soviet forces, at least for defensive purposes, since the advent of nuclear and rocket weapons.

6. The Apparent Relaxation of the Soviet Readiness Measures, Late September to Early October: After the exceptional [REDACTED] [REDACTED] during the period of about 8-20 September, there were signs of a marked abatement in the activity. [REDACTED]



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In the western USSR, fleet activity generally appeared to return to normal after about 20 September, [redacted] and there were no further apparent signs of large-scale ground force exercises or other unusual activity. In Europe, from late September to mid-October, three announced Warsaw Pact exercises were conducted (one by Czechoslovak, East German and Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, a second by Polish, East German and Soviet troops in north-western Poland and northeastern Germany, and a third by Rumanian, Bulgarian and Soviet troops in Rumania). The latter two also involved some combined naval exercise activity. These relatively small exercises, though heralded by Bloc propaganda as significant steps in raising the combat readiness of the Warsaw Pact forces, probably had little actual effect on their readiness. On the other hand, they diverted very few Soviet troops from their normal locations, [redacted]

[redacted] There were virtually no reports or indications of an exceptional readiness or alert status of either Soviet or Satellite troops. [redacted]

[redacted] The general expectation was that both Soviet and Satellite forces were preparing for anticipated large-scale fall exercises. The completion of another Soviet tactical POL pipeline in East Germany, the only apparent logistic activity of any significance in Eastern Europe, was regarded as a further indication of this.

There was, in short, as of mid-October, very little sign of any exceptional activity to support the constant claims in the Soviet press that troops were being maintained at "highest combat readiness." The only developments which might have appeared noteworthy were [redacted]

[redacted] and the intensive interest of Soviet reconnaissance aircraft in the movements of two US carriers in the Far East between 6 and 11 October. On 11 October, Moscow announced that the closed areas in the Barents and Kara Seas (for nuclear testing) would be extended until 10 November.

Meanwhile, the as yet undetected deployment of MRBMs in Cuba was continuing at a rapid pace, and a Soviet ship possibly carrying nuclear weapons to Cuba departed the Northern Fleet area in early October. As of early October, 18 SAM sites had been identified in Cuba and a few MIG-21s were operational. The Soviet Union was continuing its calls for a Berlin settlement but with no apparent sense of urgency. On 15 October, when US photographic analysis discovered the first of the MRBM sites in Cuba, Khrushchev was informing President Kekkonen that, while he had expected the US to attack Cuba in late August or early September, he now believed that the US would not take direct action.

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The foregoing apparent lull in Soviet activity (except in Cuba) raises some very interesting questions, which cannot be answered satisfactorily, although various hypotheses, not all mutually contradictory, may be offered:

a. There was a Soviet miscalculation as to US reaction, or the timing of US reaction. The USSR expected, or at least believed there was grave danger, that the US would detect the arrival of the missiles in mid-September, and believed that if it survived this period successfully without strong reaction, the danger would be materially lessened. It therefore timed its military preparedness measures for the period of maximum danger, as it saw it, and when nothing happened, felt free to relax its preparedness somewhat. While it seems difficult to believe that the USSR would have felt that the US would react more strongly to the arrival of a few missiles, not yet operational, than it would to the discovery of a lot of missiles already emplaced, this may actually have been the Soviet estimate. In fact, the whole Cuban venture seems to have been based on a miscalculation that the missiles once deployed would not result in US military reaction but would serve as a deterrent to such action and would bring the US to the bargaining table on other issues as well, e.g., Berlin.

b. The Soviet preparedness steps in mid-September were only a drill or rehearsal for a period of future crisis; the exercises and deployments were viewed as a test of readiness measures rather than a "real" alert.

exercise. If the USSR had wanted merely to conduct a rehearsal for the crisis, it could have better done it in June or July before there was any real danger of US reaction. However, it is true that some, although by no means all, of the measures that the USSR took in September were repeated or resumed during the period of the October-November alert.

c. The USSR encountered some difficulty in maintaining the readiness levels of its forces for a prolonged period. This has been hinted in Soviet statements, notably Malinovskiy's of 25 October: "Maintenance of the

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d. The September activity was largely a show for the benefit of the US and designed to demonstrate that Soviet forces were indeed at the maximum state of readiness alleged in their propaganda. The Soviet Union not only never intended to go to war, but it also did not believe that the US would consider any military action against the USSR. It actually took no real steps to raise the combat readiness of its forces. This point will be discussed at some length later in this paper. [redacted]

e. The peak of the Soviet readiness measures, or at least the discernible phase of them, may have been timed also to precede the NATO fall exercises which were conducted from 20-28 September. The USSR, traditionally suspicious of such exercises as a possible cover for attack, may have felt that once they had been completed the danger of surprise US action would be lessened.

f. The September exercises [redacted] not only served to raise readiness for a temporary period of some 10 to 12 days but they also served to implement a more permanent redeployment or other readiness measures which were in fact not relaxed but sustained through November. Having once been accomplished, the overt manifestations of the activity were no longer discernible.

7. The Week Before the Crisis: The week from the discovery of the first of the MRBM sites (15 October) until the President's announcement of them and declaration of the quarantine (22 October) was marked by a number of unusual US activities which scarcely can have failed to come to Soviet attention. Among them were the intensified reconnaissance of Cuba, a series of high-level meetings in Washington, a reinforcement of air defenses in Florida and other preparatory military measures. There is no firm basis for determining the precise date when the USSR would probably have recognized that the US had detected the sites and was preparing to take some action; however, it was probably earlier in the week rather than later. [redacted]

Between 16 and 19 October the USSR: [redacted]

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[redacted] [redacted] [redacted] There is, however, no sign that any general "alert" of Soviet forces was imposed during this period. The Soviet measures seem to have been selective and precautionary, but they were probably sufficient, together with the combat readiness taken previously, to preclude the possibility that the Soviet military forces were taken by surprise. It appears doubtful, however, that the Soviets anticipated the precise nature or full extent of the US reaction, particularly the extensive combat-ready deployment of the Strategic Air Command. There are, for example, a number of signs that their propaganda machinery had not been prepared to respond to the President's speech.

8. The Soviet Response to the Quarantine and to US Military Measures (22 October-21 November): This period has been extensively covered in current intelligence and other publications, and the reactions of the various components of the Soviet forces and of other Soviet and Satellite elements are covered in later sections of this paper. Only the highlights of this period are therefore noted here.

The USSR, after several hours delay, responded to President Kennedy's quarantine speech of 22 October with: a government statement which charged the US with piracy and threatened a retaliatory blow if the "aggressors touch off a war," but which was noncommittal about any specific Soviet counteraction or intention to support Cuba against US action; a recall of Soviet merchant ships en route to Cuba; an announcement deferring the release of troops from the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Air Defense Forces and the submarine fleet, cancelling all leaves and ordering the raising of battle readiness and vigilance of all troops; [redacted]

[redacted] There were concurrently and continuing during the following days a number of reflections [redacted] that an alert status was imposed throughout the Soviet forces, although the indications of this were scattered and in some cases would probably not have been considered discernibly different from training preparations [redacted] had not a general alert of Soviet forces been anticipated under the circumstances. In general, this period might be described, based on the evidence thus far available, as a relatively static alert of Soviet troops [redacted]

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[] the October readiness measures appear more nearly to conform with what is usually regarded as an "alert" status of troops, that is, a readying of troops at home stations for possible rapid redeployment if required. This was particularly apparent in Eastern Europe where, in contrast to the September period, there was clear evidence of a general alert of Soviet forces in Germany and of Satellite troops, particularly in East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Although redeployments during this period appear to have been limited, a number of measures taken were remarkably similar to those during September, indicating that a repetition or reimposition of virtually identical alert or combat readiness measures was undertaken in some instances. Such activity was probably most apparent in the Navy, where both the Northern and Baltic Fleets apparently carried out a dispersal of unknown extent of surface and submarine units within home waters which was similar although possibly less extensive than during September. Surveillance of the Baltic by a combined Soviet-Polish-East German naval force was resumed, apparently on a more extensive scale than during September.

[] [] On the same day, tensions, already highly acute, were further strained by the downing of a US U-2 over Cuba by a Soviet surface-to-air missile, an action which probably was not ordered by Moscow.

This date (27 October) marks the probable peak of the Cuban crisis and should presumably have also been the date of maximum readiness of Soviet troops, although [] there is no clear sign of this. Khrushchev, speaking to the Supreme Soviet on 12 December, singled out 27 October as the date on which the USSR received information that a US attack on Cuba would be carried out within the next two or three days; he indicated that this information prompted the dispatch of his proposal (made publicly the following day) that, in return for US agreement not to invade Cuba, the USSR would remove the weapons described as "offensive." This proposal had actually been conveyed privately to the President on the evening of 26 October, while on 27 October the USSR, in what appears to have been a last desperate effort to obtain a substantial US concession, publicly proposed that the USSR would pull its missiles out of Cuba if the US did the same from Turkey.

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There appears no doubt that, in addition to a belief that a US attack on Cuba was imminent, the action which had most convinced the USSR of the seriousness of US intentions was the dispersal and augmented airborne alert of the bombers of the US Strategic Air Command. There is some reason to suspect that the USSR regarded this step as so serious that it may deliberately have limited its own readiness moves and avoided any actions which might have been considered potentially offensive in nature in order to provide no possible pretext for a US attack. As will be noted below, however, there is very little available information on which to base a conclusion as to the actual readiness levels of the Soviet long-range retaliatory forces. However, in addition to repeated claims throughout the crisis that Soviet forces had been placed in the highest state of combat readiness, Red Star on both 24 and 26 October stated that the USSR was "taking all necessary measures to ensure that it will not be taken by surprise."

With the confirmation by 1 November that a dismantling of the MRBM and IRBM sites in Cuba was actually under way and the subsequent removal of the missiles and related equipment beginning on 5 November, the most acute phase of the Cuban crisis had passed. Soviet readiness measures remained in effect, however, with little discernible relaxation until after President Kennedy's announcement on 20 November that the US was lifting the quarantine in return for Khrushchev's assurances that the IL-28 bombers would also be withdrawn and that a number of Soviet ground units would "also be withdrawn in due course." On the following day, the USSR and the Warsaw Pact command announced the termination of their emergency measures and a return of forces to normal levels of combat readiness. A relaxation of the alert measures was almost immediately evident in the termination of the [REDACTED] Baltic Sea surveillance, [REDACTED]

9. How Ready Were the Soviet Forces? Any attempt to answer this most crucial of all questions from the warning standpoint can be only preliminary at this stage and must take account of the likelihood that our information is fragmentary at best and that, on some of the most important of all readiness measures, we have no information whatever. Moreover, there is sufficient information to suggest that, at least during the September period, the USSR adopted some extraordinary security precautions to conceal certain preparedness measures, if not an active deception program. The following sections of this study will be devoted primarily to a discussion of some of the factors involved in the Soviet readiness measures and the as yet unanswered questions concerning the nature of Soviet military activity during both the September period and the October-November crisis.

There has been some tendency to dismiss the Soviet activity, particularly from 22 October onward, as exclusively defensive in nature and therefore of little

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significance in providing a clue to any future pattern of Soviet preparation for possible hostilities. While the measures taken by the USSR almost certainly were primarily defensive and precautionary against possible US action, it may be noted that the distinction between defensive and offensive preparations in some spheres of activity is a narrow one. US preparations also were defensive, insofar as the Soviet Union was concerned, yet the US force brought to highest readiness was the Strategic Air Command.

10. What is Highest Combat Readiness? One of the anomalies in Soviet activity before and during the Cuban crisis is the apparent limited nature of Soviet readiness measures, particularly during October and November, as contrasted with the USSR's repeated claims that Soviet troops were brought to "highest combat readiness." This phrase ("naivysshuyu boyevuyu gotovnost")--which has also been translated "peak military preparedness," "full battle readiness," or "total combat preparedness"--appears to have been rarely used prior to September 1962 in Soviet public statements, although there had been numerous references to the importance of high combat readiness for Soviet military forces. Beginning with the 11 September government statement, however, the phrase appears again and again in Soviet publications. Day after day, the Soviet press--particularly the military press--reiterated that Soviet troops had been or were being brought to this state of preparedness because of the alleged threat to international peace as the result of US "aggressive intentions" against Cuba. One Radio Moscow English-language broadcast on 21 September translated the phrase as "war footing." Although many Soviet statements left the impression that all Soviet forces were brought to "highest combat readiness," a number of them specified that this applied above all to the Strategic Rocket Forces. The 11 September statement also singled out the submarine fleet as of special importance in the readying of Soviet forces. It was not until the 21 November order cancelling the readiness measures that the USSR announced specifically that there had been varying degrees of readiness in the several components of the armed forces, of which only the intercontinental and strategic rocket troops and the PVO were then said to have been brought to "full combat readiness." (See Sections 11-15 for a discussion of the readiness levels of the various components of the armed forces.)

As might be expected, Soviet statements are in general quite vague as to precisely what is involved in bringing troops to highest combat readiness, although they are explicit that the result of the measures taken is to place troops in readiness for instant retaliatory action against any aggressor. To cite three examples:

"What does it mean to be in a state of the highest combat readiness? In a word, this means that all the might of our armed forces, at the first signal, must be put into immediate action against the enemy,

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his strategic military, economic and political centers and main concentrations of forces."¹

"The highest combat readiness is that state in which troops are able at any moment to repel successfully a surprise nuclear attack of an aggressor and, at the first signal, to undertake resolute combat operations aimed at the complete destruction of the enemy."²

"The possibility that the enemy will attack by surprise and with massive use of nuclear weapons immeasurably increases the need for the Armed Forces to be in constant combat readiness. In some instances, the time required to bring troops to combat readiness should be measured not in days, and in a number of cases, not even in hours. For many units and formations it is now only a matter of minutes. This applies above all to the Missile Forces.... and it also applies to the National PVO.... Every unit, every formation must be ready at a signal or upon command to execute its combat mission immediately. Only with such an exceptionally high degree of readiness can an aggressor's attack be successfully foiled and his surprise blows repelled."³

In various other Red Star items, "highest combat readiness" was said to involve "intense combat training" of military units; the highest level of organization, precise execution of orders and instructions and faultless discipline; efficiently conducted training alerts in all units; and a constant state of vigilance and alertness in all forces. The Red Star article of 5 October outlined various elements of high combat readiness as including a high level of combat training in all units; perfect condition of materiel, particularly in the rocket troops and PVO whose troops must be ready to execute combat missions in a matter of minutes or even seconds; and irreproachable combat discipline. Malinovskiy further noted that "highest combat readiness" also included ideological and educational work.

Were these statements mere propaganda intended primarily for US consumption and without meaning in terms of any actual preparedness steps taken by Soviet forces? Before this is assumed to be the case, certain related information must be examined.

¹ Marshal Malinovskiy as quoted in Red Star, 25 October 1962.

² Red Star, 5 October 1962.

³ Soviet Military Strategy, edited by Marshal V. D. Sokolovskiy, Moscow 1962; Rand Corporation translation, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, pp. 307-308.

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First, the bulk of the Soviet statements were carried in Red Star, the organ of the armed forces, and only secondarily by Pravda, Izvestiya and TASS. They were thus intended primarily to reach members of the armed forces. The full extent of these statements can be found only in an analysis of the Soviet military press and not from Soviet propaganda broadcasts.

Secondly, documentary evidence confirms that there are at least three stages of combat readiness in the Soviet armed forces, from "combat readiness number 3" (the lowest stage) to "combat readiness number 1" (the highest stage). Although it is not entirely clear from available material, these conditions may be called for only in times of unusual preparedness for actual combat or for training purposes, defined as "combat duty," and there may be a fourth or lower stage of normal readiness. Imposition of any one of the readiness levels from 3 to 1 apparently calls for a series of actions designed to bring troops and equipment to a prescribed degree of readiness for military action. "Combat readiness number 1" or "condition 1" in the Navy, for example, equates to general quarters, according to a Soviet book on this subject. There is also a series of alarm or alert signals which establish the various conditions of combat readiness. Although the precise steps taken by any given type of unit will naturally vary, the sequence from lowest combat readiness (number 3) to highest (number 1) appears to be uniform throughout the Soviet armed forces. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and pilots on strip alert duty are placed in readiness conditions ranging from 3 to 1, with those in condition 1 ready for immediate takeoff. Whether the same progression of numbered readiness conditions also applies uniformly to the European Satellite forces is by no means clear, and the available information is highly conflicting.

[REDACTED]

The foregoing would thus tend to indicate that the Soviet public statements, although intentionally vague, did actually reflect a raising of combat readiness in the armed forces, which in some cases at least was the "highest combat readiness" as defined in Soviet military literature.

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A few words may be in order as to the possible relationship of varying degrees of combat readiness to an "alert" status. It appears clear that the imposition of higher than normal degrees of combat readiness does involve actions commonly described as an "alert." In some cases, the Soviets themselves seem to use the terms synonymously. Thus, Malinovsky in his address to the Armed Forces Ideological Conference in October stated: "In maintaining high combat readiness to the maximum degree, the role of soldiers, officers and generals of the main branch of the armed forces, the Strategic Rocket Troops, is extraordinarily great. They are required to maintain their powerful equipment, as they say, on alert, and to be ready within a short time to deliver crushing retaliatory blows against the most important enemy targets located at any point on earth."¹ [redacted]

It appears, however, that the varying degrees of combat readiness in the Soviet armed forces may involve a more precise and extensive series of steps than those usually associated with what might be called a simple "troop alert" or alert drill. The latter are conducted with great frequency in the Soviet forces, apparently at the discretion of the unit commander, and normally involve a sudden alerting of the troops, frequently at night, for assembly at prescribed stations or a designated concentration area, possibly followed by a road march in the ground forces or a takeoff of aircraft in the air forces, after which the troops return to barracks and the alert is terminated. The raising of combat readiness, on the other hand, would seem to involve more extensive measures and possibly a more permanent condition of enhanced readiness and to be a more meaningful indication of preparedness for possible hostilities than a simple troop alert. Although the analogy may not be entirely accurate, Soviet combat readiness stages may more nearly approximate the US "DEFCON" stages.

The timing of the Soviet announcement that troops were being brought to "highest combat readiness" (11 September) [redacted]

[redacted] suggest that the raising of combat readiness may involve, at least in some instances, a wide variety of training activities, alert measures, readying of equipment, redeployment of forces, and other preparations which go beyond those usually associated with an

¹ Red Star, 25 October 1962.

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"alert." This view is further supported by statements in the recently published Soviet book on strategy which states among other things that the strategic deployment of forces will be undertaken prior to the outbreak of war and that a "high state of combat readiness in the armed forces is an important part of this process."¹ It appears noteworthy that no official Soviet order or statement on the readiness measures referred to them as a mere "alert" and that the 21 November order cancelling the readiness measures in effect revoked both the order of 11 September and that of 23 October, thus further suggesting that the readiness measures were more or less continuously in effect from about 11 September on. The Warsaw Pact order of 21 November, on the other hand, is quite explicit in revoking only the 23 October order, thus implying that increased readiness measures in the Satellite forces did not take effect until after the President's speech of 22 October.

So far as can be determined from available information, Soviet combat readiness stages, including the imposition of "combat readiness number 1," whatever steps may be involved, apply only to the Soviet armed forces in being. Although further research to establish the validity of this conclusion is clearly in order, it would appear that such other measures as may have been taken by the USSR prior to and during the Cuban crisis would involve the issuance of additional orders beyond those involved in bringing the armed forces to "highest combat readiness."

11. The Strategic Rocket Forces: As noted above, a number of Soviet statements clearly specified that, in the raising of the combat readiness of Soviet forces, the role of the Strategic Rocket Forces was of primary importance or extraordinarily great. In general, Soviet statements convey an impression that the readying of these forces was a matter of greatest concern. In the 21 November order cancelling the readiness measures, it was stated that "Intercontinental and Strategic Rocket Troops are to shift from full (or total) combat readiness to normal combat training and activity." Men due for release from the rocket troops, together with those in the Air Defense Forces and the submarine fleet, were specifically retained in service under the Soviet order of 23 October.

There is virtually no available evidence as to whether the rocket troops were or were not brought to the level of readiness claimed by the USSR.

¹Soviet Military Strategy, p. 96.

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[redacted] It can only be concluded that these forces may have been at such a state of readiness and that Western capabilities for determining this are very poor.

12. Long Range Aviation: In the 21 November order, it was stated that "the combat readiness status /or state of constant combat preparedness/ of strategic aviation is rescinded." Khrushchev, speaking to the Supreme Soviet on 12 December, said that in connection with the state of full combat readiness, "strategic aircraft... took up prescribed positions." (It is interesting to note that these two statements contain a rare and perhaps unique reference to "strategic aviation" rather than Long Range Aviation, which suggests that medium bombers of the naval air forces may be included in the term.) Other Soviet statements appear to have given considerably less emphasis to the readiness of long-range bombers than to that of the rocket forces, and the general impression is that their readiness was of somewhat less importance to the USSR than that of the rocket troops and the Air Defense Forces.

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Whatever moves may have been undertaken by the LRA, [REDACTED]

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the most significant and unanswered question with respect to the readiness of the LRA is whether the aircraft were carrying nuclear weapons and were otherwise in a state of preparedness for immediate retaliatory strikes. [REDACTED]

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13. The Air Defense Forces (PVO) and Tactical Aviation: There are clear indications that the USSR took a number of measures to augment the readiness of fighter aircraft of the Air Defense Forces (the IAPVO) and tactical air units, particularly in the border military districts.

14. The Navy and the Merchant Fleet: The Soviet 11 September statement said that "particularly" the submarine fleet must be able to cope with its tasks, the only element of the armed forces thus singled out in the initial readiness order. The importance of the submariners in the readiness measures was again suggested in the 23 October order which deferred the demobilization of men due for release from the submarine fleet (along with those in the Strategic Rocket Forces and the PVO). In the order cancelling the readiness measures, the Navy was the only component of the armed forces for which the previous readiness level was not in some way defined, the order stating merely that "the naval forces are to shift to normal combat training." However, the order also stated that "the submarine fleet is to return to the places of usual deployment," and Khrushchev on 12 December stated that "the Navy and our submarine fleet, including atomic submarines, took up prescribed positions." Red Star

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on 26 October carried an article datelined "unidentified base, 25 October" which indicated that most of the submarines from that base had redeployed: "the submariners' piers are now sparsely populated; the majority of boats have gone to sea." On 31 October Red Star carried an editorial and full page of articles devoted to the submarine fleet, which gave somewhat unusual emphasis to its defensive as well as offensive role. The difficulties involved for submarine crews in maintaining highest combat readiness for a long period were noted, and it was stated that the submarines were then often at sea completing the last missions of the training year.

During September and again beginning approximately 24-25 October, there were a number of indications, particularly in the Northern and Pacific Fleets, of a redeployment or dispersal of naval units, including both surface ships and submarines, which was apparently largely confined to movements within local waters and did not involve out-of-area deployments. The September activity in the Pacific Fleet was extensive and prolonged [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Deployments of surface units were also extensive. Concurrently, beginning 11 September and continuing until about 20 September elements of all three western fleets were also redeployed and engaged in unusual activity, although the activity appears to have been relatively limited in the Black Sea Fleet. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and activity of auxiliary forces suggested an increase in the general logistic support required by the fleet. A fair proportion of the Baltic Fleet was also at sea during this period, apparently dispersed to some extent, and there was increased surveillance of the entrance to the Baltic by Soviet, East German and probably Polish Fleet units.

To a lesser extent, much the same pattern of activity was repeated during the October-November period. The Northern Fleet in particular deployed a considerable number of surface and an unknown number of submarine units in the Kola Inlet area, in activity which possibly represented a dispersal in local waters; the level of auxiliary activity suggested that Fleet units were replenished either under way or in coastal inlets. The Baltic Fleet, although possibly to a lesser extent than during the September period, apparently also had an unusual number of surface units and submarines at sea. A combined Soviet-East German-Polish naval surveillance of the Baltic was maintained from about 25 October until 21 November, with the activity apparently supported by the Polish 16th Radio Direction Finding Battalion which began a westward deployment about 17 October. In the Pacific

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Fleet, a special submarine brigada put to sea in the Sea of Okhotsk, there were some indications of a submarine interior barrier patrol, apparently relatively small-scale, and the number of out-of-area submarine patrols in the Pacific increased to four by the end of October.

The Fleet activity in general provides considerable indication to support the Soviet statements that elements of the Fleet, including submarines, took up prescribed positions outside their normal deployment areas. It appears probable, although the full extent of the activity cannot be determined, that substantial elements of the Navy did deploy to alternate or wartime dispersal bases, particularly in the Northern and Pacific Fleets, and that unusually large numbers of ships may also have been kept at sea, although generally within local waters, as a further defensive measure. There is, however, no apparent evidence of offensive deployments such as have been noted in major Fleet exercises, particularly in the North Atlantic.

Apart from these activities, unusual naval and merchant fleet activity was largely confined to submarines and merchant vessels involved in the Cuban buildup. The four F-class submarines deployed into the Atlantic about 27 September

had all returned to home waters by about 1 December.

There was no reported reduction in Soviet merchant shipping to foreign ports during the period of the Cuban crisis and no other apparent indication that the USSR was unduly concerned about the safety of its ships outside Communist waters.

15. The Ground Forces:

In the 21 November order, it was stated that the ground forces had been on a state of "increased" (or "higher") combat readiness rather than the "highest" combat readiness of the rocket forces and the PVO; Khrushchev on 12 December defined the readiness of the ground forces as "a state of increased military alert."

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In Eastern Europe, and particularly East Germany, where coverage of the Soviet ground forces is vastly superior to that in the Soviet Union itself, the preparedness measures of the ground forces appear generally to have been limited to what might be called precautionary alert measures designed to place the troops in readiness for rapid redeployment if necessary. There is no evidence for either the September or October-November period that any significant redistribution of Soviet troops was undertaken, with the possible exception of the Southern Group of Forces in Hungary, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Attache observations during the period confirmed that some Soviet troop movements were made.

In the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG), on the other hand, the great bulk of evidence for both September and October-November indicates that troops were held in readiness near their home stations or in barracks areas. During September and early October, the clearest sign of this was the marked absence of significant field training during a period when division and higher level exercises are normally held. In addition, [REDACTED] on 12 September at least some Soviet personnel at the GSFG headquarters were placed on an alert and combat readiness status which involved the full readying and loading of equipment for possible deployment and other increased alert measures, which Soviet personnel reportedly believed was not an exercise. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There is also a report that reconnaissance of the West German border by Soviet troops was increased from 12-18 September.

Similar alert and readiness measures were clearly discernible in GSFG from 23 October onward. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In general, there was a minimum of training activity and apparently very little deployment outside of barracks and home stations, although there are unconfirmed reports that small groups of troops were moved to camps along the West German border, probably for reconnaissance and security purposes.

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If the pattern of Soviet ground activity in Eastern Europe thus appears relatively clear, the same cannot be said for the Soviet Union, where the nature of troop activity during both the September and October-November periods is obscure.

Reports during the first three weeks of September indicate that a number of exercises were apparently held in the western military districts of the USSR, the nature of which is not clear. Whether these constituted relatively "normal" field training activity or served as cover for a strategic redeployment of some forces cannot be determined from available evidence. However, the closing of the major portion of the Moscow-Leningrad highway from 9-13 September (a step believed to be unprecedented in peacetime) strongly suggests that certain very unusual military activity, most probably involving the ground forces, was under way during the period. A Western attache was denied travel to Murmansk from 11 to 20 September.

[redacted] [redacted]

On 5 October, Red Star carried an article on combat readiness in relation to the Cuban situation by two officers of the Main Staff of the Ground Forces which provides a strong hint that some redeployment of ground forces in the western military districts had probably been undertaken. Its pertinent passages are:

"The experience of history teaches that aggressive countries have often attained significant strategic successes and even victories in war, owing to their having been able to secretly deploy and to put the army and navy in combat readiness for a surprise attack. On the other hand, the underestimation of the timely placement of armed forces in appropriate combat readiness in the face of a military threat has often been one of the reasons for defeat of particular countries.... The failures of our Army in the initial phases of the Great Patriotic War are also largely explained by the underestimation of the timely placement of troops in increased combat readiness.... Even the substantial shortcomings then existing... might not have had decisive influence on the state of defense if the troops had been deployed in time and prepared to repel the German fascist attack.... The Soviet troops did not receive orders on the advance deployment of forces and the occupation of defensive positions along the western border of the USSR.... Our people... in the face of military danger, cannot allow the country to be less prepared for conducting a victorious war in defense of its freedom and independence than the imperialist aggressors are prepared for an aggressive war." (Italics added)

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From 23-29 October, the USSR cancelled all travel by foreign diplomats, so that no first-hand observations are available of activities in the western border districts.

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16. Mobilization: The Soviet Union took special precautions in its 11 September statement to reassure the West that it was not retaining men due for release from the armed forces or calling up reservists, contrasting this with President Kennedy's request to call up 150,000 reservists. The release of trained soldiers was cited as a "clear enough indication of our peaceful intentions. No government would take such a measure if it contemplated any action of a military nature." This claim of peaceful intentions was somewhat qualified, however, by a further statement that the callup of reservists "cannot be of any serious military importance, given up-to-date means of nuclear rocket warfare." Since the 11 September statement in most other particulars was, to use a well-worn TASS phrase, "false from beginning to end," this claim clearly cannot be accepted on its face value alone.

There is thus far, however, no available evidence that the USSR undertook any unusual mobilization of reservists prior to or during the Cuban crisis.

[redacted]

The possibility that a partial secret mobilization may have been taken in 1962, particularly during the September exercises, cannot be discounted, however, particularly in light of certain statements made in Military Strategy which suggest that such mobilization would be conducted under precisely the type of conditions which then prevailed. "Partial mobilization in the past was carried out simultaneously or in succession only in certain military districts closest to the probable theater of operations. Partial mobilization was sometimes effected in a concealed fashion by mobilizing only certain units under the guise of various types of tests, assembly for training exercises, maneuvers and so on.

"Concealed mobilization is also possible under present-day conditions, but it will be carried out somewhat differently from before. As relations between the contending states become increasingly strained, they will gradually bring up to full combat

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readiness part of the forces earmarked for tasks in the initial period of the war.... A system of territorial build-up of troops during mobilization is considered the most acceptable. Under the conditions of nuclear war this system considerably speeds up the process of putting one's troops on a war footing." This discussion then goes on to point out that under territorial or dispersed mobilization each unit will be completely mobilized locally, rather than under the centralized method employed in previous wars, and that it will be unnecessary to transport mobilized troops or materiel to mobilization centers.¹ It is clear that such a method of mobilization, if conducted in the border military districts, would greatly reduce the chances of detection and would involve a minimum of disruption of transportation. Moreover, it is of interest that the reason given by the USSR for the closure of the Moscow-Leningrad highway from 9 to 13 September was "some kind of tests."

The USSR in the fall of 1962 did delay to an unknown extent the normal release of men from the armed forces. Although the annual callup and demobilization order of 7 September indicated that releases would be entirely normal, there is at least one report as early as 12 September that some men in East Germany were told that their demobilization would be deferred. Also, although the 23 October order specified that releases would be held up only in the Strategic Rocket Forces, the PVO and the submarine fleet, there are some reflections [redacted] that releases from the armed forces were temporarily deferred in all branches of the armed forces. Unfortunately, information on troop rotation in East Germany for the fall of 1962 appears too meager to reach any firm conclusion as to the extent to which demobilization was deferred or slowed down, although the evidence on balance suggests that there was at least a slowing down of departures and possibly a temporary total cessation of demobilization.

In the Satellites, there is good evidence that in several countries the normal fall releases were held up, which concurrent with the normal fall callups resulted in a temporary increase in the strength of the armed forces. In at least two countries (Bulgaria and Poland) there were reports that reservists were called up as well.

17. Logistics and Transportation: Virtually no evidence has become available for the period of the Cuban crisis which would indicate that the USSR took any unusual logistic preparations, [redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] The extent to which this apparent lack of

¹ Soviet Military Strategy, pp. 434-437.

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activity reflects the actual situation and the extent to which it may be attributable to a lack of information is uncertain, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, no information has come to light which would suggest that there was a military requisitioning of rolling stock, civil aviation or other means of transportation either in the USSR or Eastern Europe. [REDACTED]

18. Nuclear Weapons: Of all preparedness measures, the most significant in bringing Soviet forces to a state of readiness for immediate retaliation or preemptive attack is probably the arming of strategic missile nosecones, long-range bombers and other nuclear-capable components of the armed forces with nuclear weapons and the issuance of orders permitting the employment of such weapons under certain contingencies. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It Soviet public statements that their armed forces, and particularly the Strategic Rocket Forces, were at highest combat readiness carry any meaning, however, it would appear that some steps should have been taken to make nuclear weapons available for immediate use. Rigid controls on the storage and release of nuclear weapons in the Soviet Union insure that their employment will not be initiated without a decision of the highest political authority, and special units have probably been established throughout the chain of command (perhaps under the KGB) to hold custody of nuclear weapons.

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The possible delivery of nuclear weapons to Cuba, although it has not been firmly established, further indicates that the Soviet Union may have taken unprecedented measures with respect to the release of nuclear weapons. The indications that such weapons were or may have been in Cuba include: Khrushchev's statement on 24 October to a US source that both nuclear and high explosive warheads for ballistic missiles were in Cuba and a few other Soviet statements implying that nuclear warheads had been delivered to Cuba; the detection in Cuba of nosecone transport units and arched-roof buildings believed to have been intended for the storage of nuclear warhead components; and the trip to Cuba from the Northern Fleet area of the Soviet ship Aleksandrovsk, possibly carrying nuclear weapons.

19. Activation of Alternate Headquarters: One key indication of Soviet war preparedness would probably be a widespread relocation of major military commands and possibly key elements of the civilian leadership to alternate war headquarters. Although there is little apparent indication that such preparations were taken during the period preceding or during the Cuban crisis,

it would be hazardous indeed to conclude that they were not activated.

During September, the absence of most of the Soviet High Command from public appearances from about 9 September until early October precludes a determination as to whether they were attending field exercises, had possibly moved to alternate command posts outside Moscow, or were otherwise occupied.

During late October, most of the High Command

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is known to have been in the Moscow area at least on 25 October when most of them attended a Rumanian reception, and the civilian leadership made a number of conspicuous public appearances during this period. Thus, on balance, it appears unlikely that any major components of the Ministry of Defense were relocated, although the possibility that secure or underground facilities may exist fairly close to Moscow cannot be discounted.

20. Civil Defense: Information which has only recently become available, months after the event, indicates that approximately concurrent with the military preparedness measures during September civil defense alerts and exercises were also conducted at least in the Baku and possibly the Nebit-Dag areas in the Transcaucasus and Turkestan, respectively. [redacted]

Apart from this, there have been only very limited indications thus far that unusual civil defense precautions were taken in the USSR either prior to or during the Cuban crisis. A few other civil defense drills were reported late in the summer, but evidence is lacking that these were stepped up in comparison with previous years. [redacted]

Virtually the only other available reports of unusual civil defense activity during the period were from Bulgaria, where city-wide meetings were held in Sofia during the week of 28 October to 3 November to discuss evacuation procedures and courses were begun in poison gas defense. [redacted]

[redacted] The only other indications of possible medical or civil defense preparedness were a few sightings of possibly larger than normal numbers of ambulances in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. There were no publicized advisory warnings to the populace and, in general, it appears that the Bloc leaders sought to avoid taking measures which would have caused undue public alarm.

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21. Security, Deception and Diversionary Measures: The Soviet political deception measures in connection with the Cuban buildup are well-known and need no elaboration. They involved Khrushchev personally as well as all other spokesmen for the USSR, both publicly and through private diplomatic channels, in direct and indirect falsehoods to the President of the United States and the world at large. Every effort was taken to mislead the US as to Soviet intentions and, on occasion, to divert attention to other areas as the ostensible primary subjects of Soviet concern. Not only the Indonesian venture but to some extent the Berlin issue were played up for diversionary purposes. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that all Soviet threats with respect to conclusion of a peace treaty with East Germany after the US elections were intended entirely to mislead and to concentrate attention on the German issue, since one major outcome which the USSR foresaw from the Cuban venture was undoubtedly a more favorable climate to pursue its objectives with respect to Berlin.

As is also well known, elaborate security precautions were taken with respect to the delivery of military equipment to Cuba, both at sea and in Cuba. The only notable lapse in Soviet security in this field was the failure to camouflage the construction of the MRBM and IRBM sites.

Less attention has been paid to security and deception measures within the USSR itself with respect both to the nature of the shipments to Cuba and the military preparations of Soviet forces. It is noteworthy, even for the USSR, that there was not a single known leak through Soviet or Satellite channels of the true nature of Soviet shipments to Cuba, that security restrictions on the movement of equipment and troops into and through Soviet ports were so rigid that no information has ever been obtained on them, and that, although thousands of Soviet troops were deployed to Cuba, there was no discernible reflection of this [redacted]

Certain restrictions which were placed on travel into the Black Sea and Caucasus areas from July onward quite probably were related to the movement of equipment into Black Sea ports. Various pretexts were offered for these restrictions, particularly to Rostov. A reported serious riot in the Rostov area about 1 June was generally believed as late as September to be the reason for the restrictions, although in retrospect it appears that this area may have been a key point for certain military movements. Otherwise, the USSR appears to have accomplished the military deliveries without imposing any abnormal restrictions on Western travellers. The port of Kaliningrad, through which many of the troops were moved, is normally closed to Western travellers. The only highly unusual travel restrictions known to have been imposed throughout the period were the closure of the Moscow-Leningrad highway from 9-13 September and the denial of all Western diplomatic travel from 23 to 29 October.

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22. Satellite Military Reactions: Although there is no proof, it is probable that the top Satellite political and military leaders were informed some time during the summer, probably during August when several of the leaders made visits to the USSR, of the nature of Soviet shipments to Cuba and of probable Soviet plans to exploit the advantages to be derived from the hoped-for successful positioning of strategic missiles in Cuba. In addition, a number of combined Soviet-Satellite exercises were conducted during the summer and fall in Eastern Europe, which suggest that Soviet military planning, particularly in air defense preparedness measures, was coordinated in some degree with the Satellites. An East German regimental commander who defected on 8 September, although he had no knowledge of any Soviet activity in Cuba, reported that an inspection of East German units by the Warsaw Pact high command had emphasized a speedup of unit training, that East German training was to be accelerated and completed a month earlier than usual, and that he believed a Warsaw Pact exercise would be used to support a blockade of West Berlin that fall.

There is, however, no discernible indication that Satellite forces were alerted in connection with the Soviet readiness measures during September, and the readying of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe at that time appears to have been

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quite limited in comparison with the activity in the USSR. There were, however, continuing indications, particularly during August and September, that East German forces were being prepared for a possibly greater role around Berlin and along the western zonal border, probably in expectation of planned Soviet moves with respect to Berlin had the Cuban venture succeeded.

Beginning on 23 October with the issuance of the order to raise the readiness of the Warsaw Pact forces, there were numerous indications of an alert of East German and Czechoslovak forces, several signs of an increased readiness of Polish troops [redacted] and some but considerably fewer indications of an alert status in the southern Satellite forces. In general, the readiness measures of East German and Czechoslovak forces appear to have been very similar to those of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe. [redacted]

[redacted] Several East German detectors and observations in East Germany confirmed that units had been placed on alert about 24 October which involved a restriction of all personnel, a cancellation of leaves, a return of units to home stations, and a suspension of training and border obstacle construction. There were some indications as well of tightened security on industrial installations and of a limited alert of East German party officials. No major troop movements were made, although there may have been a limited reinforcement of the borders with West Germany, and there was a possible alert of Czechoslovak railroad facilities. No information is available on any unusual measures taken by the East German railroads. Observations indicated that an undetermined number of Czechoslovak aircraft were probably moved to alternate bases [redacted]

[redacted] Throughout the Satellites, there were no unusual restrictions placed on movements of Western diplomatic and attache personnel, a probable further indication that no offensive measures or significant deployments were taken and that it was desired that Western observers know this. The alerts, as far as can be ascertained, appear to have consisted of a precautionary readying of forces at home stations, a suspension of normal autumn releases from the armed forces in several countries, and an apparently relatively limited callup of reservists in some instances (see previous section on mobilization).

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24. The Call for "Volunteers" from the Armed Forces: During the Suez crisis in the autumn of 1956, the USSR publicly announced that members of its armed forces had applied as "volunteers" to assist Egypt, although the threat to send such personnel to Egypt was stressed only after the peak of the crisis had passed. No evidence was obtained that the USSR had seriously intended to recruit such "volunteers." In contrast, prior to and during the Cuban crisis, there appears to have been no public reference in the USSR to a recruitment of military "volunteers." There was, however, an unpublicized campaign within the armed forces [redacted] to encourage personnel to "volunteer" for service in Cuba; it was apparently initiated about the time of the Soviet Government statement on Cuba (11 September). It should be noted that by this time the bulk of Soviet forces dispatched to Cuba were either already en route or most certainly had already been selected and initial preparations begun for their movement to Cuba. It is doubtful, therefore, both from the timing standpoint and from the unlikelihood that the troop units and personnel for Cuba would have been selected on a "volunteer" basis, that the campaign for "volunteers" in the armed

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forces bore any direct relation to the actual selection or movement of troops to Cuba. It did serve a psychological purpose within the armed forces, however, coinciding with the preparedness measures initiated at the same time, of emphasizing the USSR's seriousness of purpose and of conditioning the troops for the future revelation that Soviet combat forces had actually been sent to Cuba. In an article published in February 1963, General Yepishev, Chief of the Main Political Directorate, claimed that: "During the events in the Caribbean, entire large units and units (soyedineniya and chasty), led by their commanders, applied to the Minister of Defense for permission to be sent to Cuba; thousands of soldiers wrote applications expressing their desire to go there as volunteers. . . ."

25. The Role of the Military in the Cuban Decisions: There is virtually no available evidence, nor even good hints, as to what individuals or groups within the Soviet Union originally propounded the suggestion of a deployment of strategic missiles to Cuba, or what individuals or groups may have opposed the venture. It may be argued on the one hand that Khrushchev personally originated the project as a means to obtain a rapid alteration in the balance of power which might permit him to pursue other aspects of his foreign program, including a Berlin peace treaty, or, on the other hand, that the military, acutely conscious of their actual strategic inferiority, proposed the venture as a prerequisite to any new moves with respect to Berlin or in other areas which might involve a risk of commitment of Soviet forces. In any event, it appears almost certain that the advantages and disadvantages of the venture must have been discussed at length and that the final decision was a collective one. It is also clearly evident that Khrushchev, whether or not he first proposed the idea, was deeply committed to it and that he personally led the political deception campaign designed to assure the US and the world that the Soviet Union had no intention of placing any offensive weapons in Cuba.

In April 1962, there were a number of changes in the Soviet high command which are notable primarily because of the extraordinary secrecy which surrounded them. It was not until the publication of the Soviet Encyclopedia in October that the USSR made it known either publicly or privately that there had been a number of shifts of commanders, including the appointment of Marshal Biryuzov as commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces. It may be surmised that the unusual secrecy concerning these changes was in some way connected with the Cuban decision and may have reflected some opposition within the military establishment. There is no evidence, however, that Marshal Moskalenko, who was replaced as commander of the missile forces and appointed to the post of chief inspector, was opposed to deployment of his missiles to Cuba or that he has actually fallen from favor.

If the circumstances surrounding the original decision to deploy the missiles to Cuba are thus obscure, the circumstances surrounding their withdrawal point fairly

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clearly to the likelihood that Khrushchev personally made the decision or at least led the argument in favor of the retreat. There are, moreover, a number of reports which suggest that the decision was opposed by elements within the military establishment, at least without some quid pro quo such as the 27 October offer to trade Soviet missiles in Cuba for US missiles in Turkey. The extent to which the Soviet high command itself may have opposed the withdrawal or favored a harder bargaining position is, however, totally unknown. That there was some opposition to the Soviet course of action within the military was strongly suggested by Marshal Chuykov's 17 November article in Red Star which implied that some military personnel were criticizing the political leadership for "spoiling" Soviet military successes and in effect reminding the military of its subordination to the Party and to the decisions of the political leadership. An unusual number of ensuing references in the Soviet press to the supremacy of the Party over the military in matters of policy may also be related, at least in part, to military dissatisfaction over the outcome of the Cuban affair.

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15 July 1963

THE SOVIET BLOC ARMED FORCES
AND THE CUBAN CRISIS
A DISCUSSION OF READINESS MEASURES

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